**Beyond the Common Core: The Subtext Strategy**

**for 21st Century Reading**

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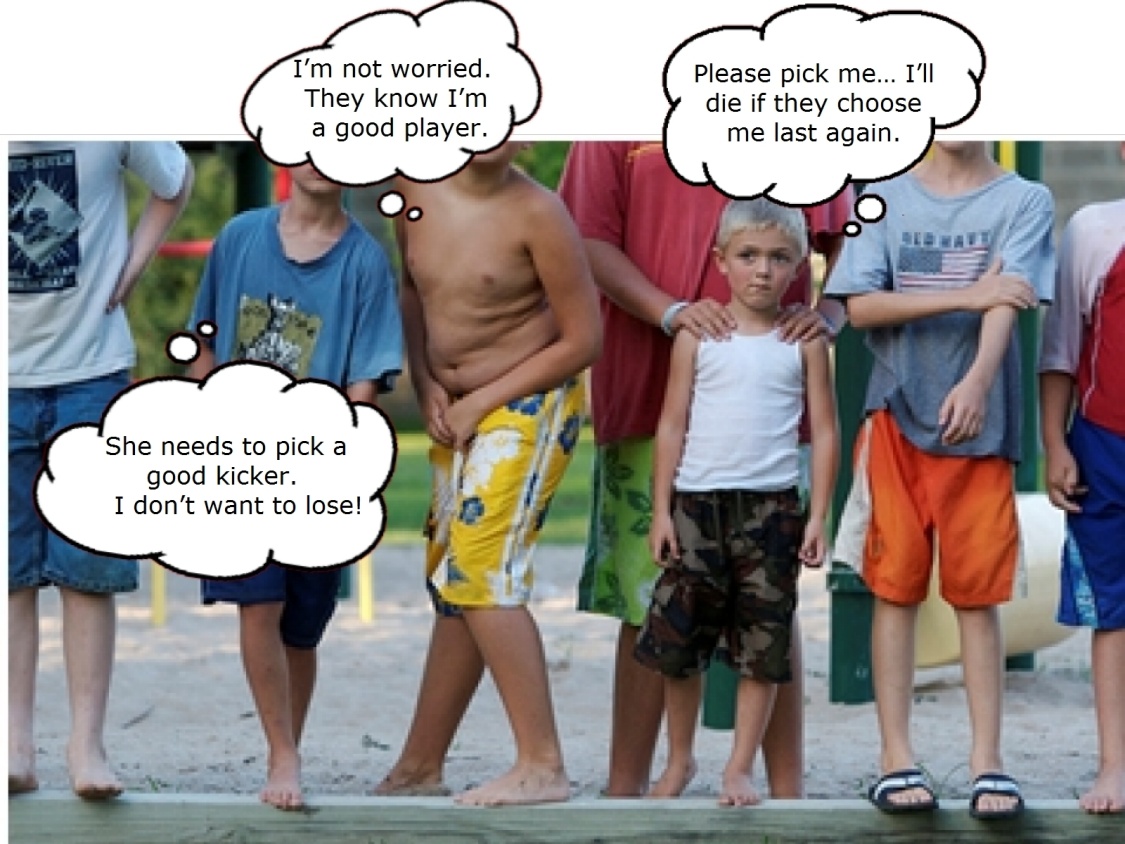
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Remember those playground days…when kids were choosing sides?

What were *you* thinking and feeling as your experience was unfolding?

That is, what was your \**subtext?*



**\*Subtext:** What people/characters are thinking and feeling (*inside their heads)*

From *Breakthrough to Meaning: Helping Your Kids*

*Become Better Readers, Writers and Thinkers* (Heinemann 2006)

NOTE: Today’s article was condensed for 5th graders by Mark W.F. Condon.

Original new article can be found at:

<http://trib.com/news/state-and-regional/family-bullying-to-blame-in-wyoming--year-old-s/article_f75be98c-cde6-5b00-8834-b5b04a805925.html>

**An Invested Reader: Someone who has an interest in/**

**opinion about the issue or text at hand**

**On your Subtext Worksheet (Subtexting for Invested Readers)…**

* *Sketch* (NOTE: We didn’t say “draw”!) your invested reader in the middle of your page.

Include details in your sketch that tell what’s important about your reader. Begin to BECOMEthat reader…as if you are telling about yourself.

* + - * + What is your name? Your age?
        + What is your gender?
        + What about life experiences? Connections to this issue?
        + How comfortable are you with reading? Are you a competent reader? Do you struggle? Prefer fiction? Nonfiction?
* Add words to describe who you are (e.g. caring, hostile, thoughtful, angry, etc).

After the experience, reflect on the following:

*What happened when you subtexted for the reader you created—for your invested reader?*

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**How Does Subtexting for Invested Readers Impact Our Reading?**

*Clyde, Barber, Hogue & Wasz 2012*

* It requires us to respondto an author’s message from a variety of perspectives, each of which broadens our understanding of the issue at hand.
* Responding as an invested reader pushes us to draw upon prior knowledge about a topic, leading to a deeper comprehension of the text.
* It enables us to sidestep the intentions of the author---whether noble or manipulative—to explore the *impact* of a message on others with a vested interest. “We feel, rather than observe from a distance…[T]he very act of considering ‘How might this person experience this situation?’ develops an important ‘habit of mind’” (Christensen, 2000, p. 135).
* Subtexting for an invested reader shifts our attention to details in the text from things that resonate with us personally, to information that is relevant to our reader. We seem to notice more, to read more deeply, and this new information helps us see the world differently.
* The strategy brings us face to face with our own insufficient knowledge base, often propelling us to become more informed about the issue under study.
* It helps us develop the “social imagination” (Johnston 1993) that enables us to appreciate others’ lives, values and concerns. We become more empathetic, less judgmental. Even if we don’t agree with another point of view, we seem better able to appreciate that perspective.
* Issues are no longer viewed as “black and white”; instead, we begin to appreciate the complexities surrounding those issues, and the consequences they have for others.
* Applied to the reading of advertisements, commercials, and other multimedia texts, subtexting for invested readers helps us get in touch with the motives of the storytellers and the ways in which they attempt to manipulate readers. We become more informed consumers who are able to weed out substance from gimmicks.
* Finally, subtexting for invested readers helps us become more aware of potential readers’ responses to *our own* writing, better able to anticipate readers’ needs.

From *Breakthrough to Meaning (*Heinemann 2006)